

# HEAD FOR



## Serbia's best music festival offers song, sun and blue Danube

by **Debbie Manley**

**FANCY a music festival but with great weather and no need for wellies? Enter Serbia's Exit.**

Exit Festival's very civilised setting is the 17th century Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad, Serbia's second largest city.

And the only worry here is sunburn as you watch 600 bands perform on 25 stages.

Exit started in 2000 as a rebellion against Slobodan Milosevic. The original event lasted 100 days and ended in a "Get the Vote" party on the day before Milosevic's downfall as president of Yugoslavia.

The four-day festival is now recognised as one of Europe's biggest with The Chemical Brothers, Pendulum, David Guetta, Missy Elliott and Royksopp all thrilling the crowds last year.

This year's line-up includes Arcade Fire, Pulp, Jamiroquai and Portishead from July 7-10.

Just as at UK festivals, beer is bought with tokens but what British music fans will love are the prices – it's

less than £2 a pint. Exit is also very relaxed. The first bands come on at 7pm, with the main act at midnight.

Dance acts carry on until 8am – and the arena features acrobats on ropes, girls dancing in champagne glasses and stilt walkers.

With the fortress overlooking the Danube river, it's an ideal location from which to see the sun set from the beanbags and comfy sofas of the terrace. Touches like this make the festival far more relaxed – and a lot less muddy – than Glastonbury.

Check out the "Drunk Clock" – so called because the hour and minute hands are the opposite way round to make it easier for the sailors to read the time when sauntering by on the river below.

### **Fortress**

Boat or not, it certainly confused us a few times. But it's hardly surprising when you can knock back a shot from a test tube before you get to the steps – they're sold all along the road to the fortress.

You can also take boat trips down the Danube. We went on a fish picnic

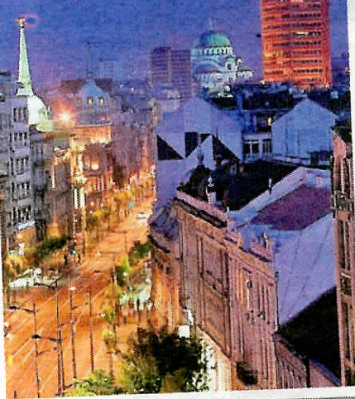


**PACKED OUT:** Crowds gather at one of the main stages

# EXIT



**NIGHT LIFE:**  
Streets of  
Belgrade



**GO WITH THE FLOW:**  
Cruise the stunning  
Danube in Belgrade

from Indija, 20 miles from Novi Sad. But don't forget to take insect spray to combat the mozzies.

For a taste of the real Serbia, we headed to the cafés set in 19th century buildings in Novi Sad – a city known as the Serbian Athens.

Here you'll find great food and beer cheaper than at the festival.

Have a look at Laze Teleckog Street and Ulica Mite Ruzica especially. If you get the chance head to Radio Café where wirelesses cover the walls.

It's also worth taking a wander round the Jewish Synagogue.

Completed in 1909, it's now used for concerts and events.

St Nicholas is the oldest church in Novi Sad and inside you'll find pictures of St George and the dragon. It's also where Albert Einstein christened his children in 1913.

Outside the church walls, grab a glass of rakija (a strong fruit brandy

served as a shot), or sljivovica (plum brandy), which is considered the national drink.

To soak up all the booze, take a short walk to Cokaye restaurant, where the walls are covered in old photos, uniforms and musical instruments.

Serbian food is delicious, too, so try traditional fish soup (riblja corba) and corn bread (proja).

We stayed at the four-star Hotel Aleksandar, a short taxi ride from Exit that cost about 200 dinars (£1.50) during the day, but more at night depending on how much you haggle.

But if you fancy taking up residence somewhere more rural, check out Salas 137, an old farm in Vojvodina. There are 14 well-equipped bedrooms here from £29 a night for a single, plus horse riding and wine tasting.

While in Serbia you simply must

spend a few days in the capital, Belgrade, 60 miles south of Novi Sad. Nearly all Belgrade's names in history mean "white city", and once you see the white marble cathedral of Saint Sava – the largest orthodox church in the world – you'll understand why.

Construction started in 1935 and it is still not finished, but is being funded by public donations.

## Relics

The city was bombed and shelled heavily during the Kosovo War in 1999 but authorities have been busy rebuilding.

Kalemegdan park and fortress, built on a 125-metre ridge, has great views over the Great War Island, where the River Sava meets the Danube. Erected by the Romans, the fortress has been rebuilt by the Byzantines, Hungarians, Turks

and Austrians. There are also tennis courts, an observatory and a planetarium.

Beli Dvor, the white palace, home of the Karadordevic royal family, is open to the public and full of works of art, including Rembrandts.

It's a great final stop before finally heading for Serbia's exit.

**FACTFILE:** Tickets for the Exit Festival cost from £89 for four days. Camping is available on site and there are also many hostels nearby that start from just £19 per night.

Flights are available to Serbia from London with Jat Airways, [www.jat.com](http://www.jat.com). An

official tourist service offers discounts for tickets with flights and accommodation. You can also book coaches for transfers. Visit [www.exittrip.org/eng/](http://www.exittrip.org/eng/). See also [www.serbia.travel](http://www.serbia.travel) and [www.novisad.org](http://www.novisad.org) for more details.

**TRAVEL TIPS**

- **WEAR** flat shoes. There are hundreds of steps climbing up to the fortress plus you can explore some of the 11 miles of underground tunnels.
- **DRINK** lots of water, use suncream and wear a hat. It can get very hot at festival time in July with daytime temperatures soaring to 35°C (95°F).
- **GET** ready to haggle with taxi drivers going to and from the festival. It's cheap but you can normally get it cheaper!